

Teaching Guide for
Exploring the Bible

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To Lynn Tooma, SSND, who tragically died shortly after her original course was published. May the memory of her wonderful contributions to youth ministry be sustained by this revision of her work.

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Introduction



THIS COURSE AND THE DISCOVERING PROGRAM

Exploring the Bible offers the young people a view of the Bible as a whole, with emphasis on the books of the New Testament. The Discovering Program also offers another Bible-based course: *Exploring the Story of Israel*. That course focuses on the books of the Old Testament, and is best taught after the students have worked with *Exploring the Bible*. It encourages the students to regard the Bible as a book that forms and guides the church and that can enrich their life.

This course aims to provide a foundation to sustain the students' future study and prayer. To achieve this goal, the sessions offer practical hands-on experiences that invite the students to become comfortable using the Bible. Young people who experience a sense of ease and competence with the Bible will be in a position to deepen their knowledge and use of it as they mature.

Exploring the Bible can be offered at any time of the year. Its content does not depend on information or understandings gained from other Discovering Program courses. However, this course can prepare the students to benefit more fully from the other courses in the program that use or depend on a knowledge of the Bible, such as *Meeting Jesus*, *Praying*, and *Being Catholic*. If you wish further information about the Discovering Program, which consists of fourteen courses, consult the coordinator's manual.

The six session plans of this course are each designed for a 1-hour meeting. If your group is scheduled to be together for more than an hour, the sessions can be extended with the optional approaches suggested at the end of the session plan. Also consult these approaches as alternative strategies if your teaching style or the students' learning style calls for changes.

The time estimates suggested for the session steps are based on a group size of about fifteen participants. If your group has considerably more or fewer members, you may need to make minor adjustments in the session plans. This course, like all Discovering courses, works well with larger groups, but in such cases you will have less opportunity to address the students' individual contributions and needs. The course does not readily lend itself to daylong or other types of protracted schedules; it is best taught in sessions that meet weekly or every other week.

BACKGROUND

The Young Adolescent and This Course

The sessions in this course are designed to involve the students in exploring the Bible not only intellectually, but also experientially through handling and reading it. The sessions provide a balance between direct contact with the Bible itself and translation of its meaning into young people's everyday experience. Although this course must address some abstract concepts, the sessions provide activities and experiences that relate these concepts to concrete concerns. Several real-life examples are provided in each session to illustrate points and to directly engage the students.

The students' familiarity with the Bible may vary considerably. They may come to this course with many perspectives on and predispositions toward the Bible, or with none. Some may be familiar with the book and may even have developed a pattern of reading it; others will have virtually no experience with it. Some students may have developed an interest in it and may have many questions about its authorship and the truth of its contents. In particular, students who have been exposed to traditions that interpret the Bible in a literal sense tend to have these kinds of concerns. Address such questions as directly and honestly as possible. But keep in mind that this course is intended primarily to develop an appreciation of the Bible and to establish an ease and "friendship" with it.

Although broad knowledge of the Bible and biblical scholarship are valuable and helpful, success in teaching this course does not depend on them. Rather success depends on the developing ease in relating to the students as a person of faith working with people of faith, as a person who val-

ues and uses the Bible as a source of prayer and action and urges the students to do so also.

The Theology of This Course

Although the Catholic church shares many beliefs with other Christian churches, Catholicism's understanding of the Bible—its interpretation and its use—distinguishes it from some other Christian denominations. Catholic faith and practice are based on the following basic beliefs about the Bible as God's revelation to humankind.

Catholics believe that the Bible is inspired. In accepting the Bible as the word of God, Catholics regard it as the unique story of God's involvement in the life of Israel and of the early Christian communities. Although the Bible was written by many human authors, who reflected the cultures and understandings of their time, God's message to people was recorded in a way that could be shared with future generations. When Catholics read the Bible today, they believe that it is the inspired word of God. Because of this, the Bible has an authority equaled by no other written source.

Catholics believe that the Bible is true. When Catholics assent to the truth of the Bible, they recognize in the Bible the content of the message God intended to share with all humankind. The message of the Bible is consistent and unified throughout. That is, the message of God's creative and salvific love is always present; throughout the Bible, the same themes unfold repeatedly through a variety of human authors, eras, and situations.

Biblical scholarship has contributed to Catholics' understanding of how the Bible was formed over the centuries, from its earliest oral traditions to the written form that exists today. This scholarship has also shed light on the cultures and traditions in which various portions of the Bible were written, the languages used, and the people and situations addressed.

This understanding of the development of the Bible explains why Catholics do not interpret it in a literal sense. Although the religious truth of the Bible endures, Catholics understand that many myths and symbols were employed to convey that truth in ways that would speak to the people and cultures of all times. Catholics rely on the collective experience of the community of believers mediated through the gathering of the church in councils, the magisterium, and the lives of believers to interpret the truth of the Bible. This approach to the Bible distinguishes Catholics from Christians who interpret the Bible literally.

Catholics believe that the Bible is foundational. For Catholics the Bible and Tradition form the foundation on which the church's faith is built. Catholic identity is found in the essence of the Gospel—the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus. This gives meaning and focus to all that Catholics believe. Catholic teaching is based consistently on biblical principles. The church's sacramental life, moral teachings, and spirituality are all deeply rooted in the Scriptures and have evolved in ways consistent with the spirit of the Bible.

Fidelity to the spirit of the Bible is one criterion—along with sacred Tradition and the magisterium—that Catholics use in evaluating faith experience.

Catholics believe that the Bible is living. For Catholics the Bible is a living expression of God’s word, that is, it is as vital today as it was in the past. When Catholics read the Bible, they read it to understand not only how God spoke to the Jews or to the early church but also how God speaks to all people of all times, to all who share the human condition. The Bible continues to be new for people of each generation, and people continue to interact with the Bible as they bring it to bear on new life situations and experiences. In concert with the faith tradition of the church, the Bible continues to provide the people of God direction for living.

This Course and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

All Discovering courses rely on the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* as a primary resource and a guide to theological accuracy. The *Catechism* can also serve as a valuable source of both information and inspiration for the teacher. We encourage you to review and reflect on certain sections of the *Catechism* as you prepare to teach.

Part 1, chapter 2, of the *Catechism* discusses revelation in the Old Testament and Jesus as the fullness of God’s self-revelation (nos. 50–73). It then examines the transmission of revelation to and through the church (nos. 74–100). Next, it documents the church’s understanding of inspiration and the truth of the Scriptures (nos. 101–119). Finally, it explains the church’s understanding of the canon of the Scriptures, the relation between the two Testaments, and their place in the church’s life (nos. 120–141).

Teaching This Course

Each course in the Discovering Program consists of two components: a teaching guide like this one that fully describes the course goals, objectives, content, and session plans, and a companion student booklet. The booklet is not a conventional textbook, in that the students are never expected to read it outside of the sessions. In fact, substantial reading is never required as a regular feature of the learning process. Nor does the booklet look like a textbook; for instance, it contains no recognizable chapters as one would expect in a standard text. The student booklet for each Discovering course, rather, is to be used only in conjunction with the session plans described in the teaching guide. It is effective in this way because of the following features:

- The booklet provides a kind of running summary of the themes and essential information that are presented through the engaging session plans. This gives students a record of what they have learned in the course. It is also a helpful feature when a student misses a session; at the next session, you can ask him or her to briefly review relevant pages from the booklet.

- The booklet uses sidebars and quotes related to the main topics to draw the young people further into the material and enrich their learning. You may use the sidebars in any way that seems appropriate—perhaps as discussion-starters, topics for journal entries, or simply focal points for a brief silent reflection.
- The booklet includes an occasional personal reflection or journal-writing activity that students are asked to complete quietly on their own.
- The booklet presents activities designed for use in small groups—such as discussion-starters, role-plays, and vignettes.
- Finally, the booklet’s attractive design—using original art, bold colors, interesting type, evocative photos, and so on—is intended to support the total learning process.

Student Booklet Sidebars

The student booklet includes a number of quotes and bits of interesting information that are not central elements of the course content. Set off graphically from the other booklet materials, these sidebars are generally not referred to in the session plans. They are included in the booklet to spark the students’ interest and imagination. As you prepare for each session, reflect on the sidebars and decide if you wish to use any of them in your teaching.

Student Booklet Bound into the Teaching Guide

For your convenience and easy reference, a complete copy of the student booklet for *Exploring the Bible* is bound into the back of this guide. You may find it helpful to tab or mark the booklet pages related to a given session as you prepare to teach it. That will make it easy to flip back and forth between the guide and the booklet.

Student Booklet Pages in the Session Plans

As a visual aid, reduced versions of some student booklet pages are reproduced in the left-hand margin of the session plans. Such pages appear at the beginning of the related instructions. If more than one booklet page is involved in an activity, only the first of those pages is reproduced in the margin.

Prayer Experiences

Establish a prayer area within the room where you will meet with your group. This area will become a focal point for a time of prayer during each session. An enthroned Bible in a designated place in the room attests to the importance of the Scriptures and of shared prayer. Items such as a candle and a plant or flowers are recommended for the enthroned Bible.

Prayer opportunities are part of each session. Everyone is called to prayer through simple words and actions, such as lighting a candle, moving to a new location in the room, asking for silence, or playing music conducive to silent reflection. These simple gestures help settle everyone down and center them for reflection and prayer.

The prayer experiences in this course have been created to establish an attitude of reverence for the word of God. The students are given numerous opportunities to use their Bible as the source for personal prayer

and reflection. Young people generally respond when their leader creates a tone that fosters intimate and reverent prayer.

The Biblical Framework for This Course

This course views the Bible as a collection of inspired and life-giving literature that urgently addresses us today. The sessions introduce the students to the Bible in the following ways:

Session 1 invites the students to focus on the primal events that established a people: the Exodus and Covenant experience, and the death and Resurrection of Jesus. Just as crucial events shape our life, so too did the crucial events of the Jewish people and of the followers of Jesus shape theirs.

Session 2 provides the students with an opportunity to look closely at the narratives that flow from the crucial stories of Exodus-Covenant and death-Resurrection. It invites them to see that the stories in the first six books of the Old Testament, about the patriarchs and matriarchs and the sojourn in the desert, are Covenant stories. Likewise, in the New Testament, the Gospels are life-giving stories, filled with the light of the Resurrection.

Session 3 enlists the students' participation in a broad survey of the remaining historical books of the Old Testament. These books show us how the Jewish people fared as Covenant partners with God. The session then focuses on Acts of the Apostles, which chronicles the Apostles' mission to carry the good news of Jesus' death and Resurrection to the ends of the earth.

Session 4 focuses the students' attention on some of the literature of instruction and vocation. The prophetic books of the Old Testament proclaim the task and grace of being God's Covenant partner. The Epistles in the New Testament call us to understand and deepen our life as a Resurrection community.

Session 5 offers a brief exploration of the wisdom books of the Old Testament, which are also books of instruction and vocation. In addition, this session invites the students to explore the church year. It focuses on the place of the Bible in our shared worship—the Eucharist. This exploration is designed to help the students recognize the vital place the Scriptures hold in the life of the church.

Session 6 offers a review of the books of the Bible. It then engages the students in a Scripture search centered on the Gospel of Matthew. In this search the students have a chance to see the intimate relation between the Old and New Testaments. They are helped to recognize that the New Testament continues and fulfills the promise of the Old Testament.

Bibles for the Students

The Bible is an essential component for this course. Ideally, the students should use a Bible that they own. See if the parish school of religion can afford to purchase Bibles or subsidize their purchase. Or perhaps parents or sponsors could give them as gifts.

If it is not possible to give each student a Bible to keep, try to provide a Bible for each to use during the course. It is best if everyone has the same

translation. If this is not possible, try to divide your group into smaller groups of people with the same translation. Comparing the various translations can add a further dimension to your discussions throughout the course, though it may slightly complicate some activities and discussions.

The following translations are among the best available for Catholic young people:

- The New American Bible (1991). This version is a modern translation of the Scriptures that is faithful to ancient sources. It is approved for use during the liturgy of the word and therefore will be somewhat familiar to the students.
- The New Jerusalem Bible (1990). This translation uses contemporary language, comes closest to using inclusive language, and provides theological insights through extensive notations that accompany the text. It is also an approved translation for use in the liturgy of the word.
- The New Revised Standard Version (1989). This recent translation uses gender-inclusive language when such use is consistent with rigorous biblical scholarship.
- The Good News Bible: The Bible in Today's English Version (1993). This translation attempts to capture and convey the meaning set forth in the original texts, in language that is accessible to a broad readership. It is truer to the original meanings than paraphrased versions, and it is presented in language that young people can more readily understand. Most students respond enthusiastically to this translation. It can be obtained from the Catholic Bible Press, a division of Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Some of the scriptural excerpts are cited as adapted. Such passages generally have been adapted to make the language more accessible and to avoid exclusive language.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Curriculums take on greater clarity, direction, and purpose if they are described in terms of intended goals and objectives. This observation is based on a commonsense principle: We have a difficult time getting somewhere if we do not know where we are going. Educators who design learning experiences must identify their destination as a first step in determining how to get there. The statement of goals and objectives is a practical way to identify the desired outcomes for a program.

In the Discovering Program, goals and objectives are used in the following ways.

Goals. Goals are broad statements of what we wish to accomplish—learning outcomes we hope to achieve. The coordinator's manual for the Discovering Program provides the goals for all the courses in the curriculum. Each course within the total program also includes a statement of its goals. The goals often have an idealistic quality, inviting the teacher to reflect on how the course relates to the personal and faith development of the young

people. At the same time, the course goals are realistic, measurable, and attainable. As a teacher, at the end of the course, you should be able to look back and determine if you have in fact achieved the course goals.

Objectives. Objectives are statements that define how to get to the goals. They name specific tasks that must be accomplished if the goals are to be achieved. The coordinator's manual identifies the objectives for each course in the curriculum. Each course, in turn, supplies a clear statement of objectives for each session in the course.

The Goals and Objectives of *Exploring the Bible*

Goals

The goals for this course in the Discovering Program are as follows:

- that the students understand the Bible as God's self-revelation
- that they become familiar and comfortable with the Bible as a source of personal instruction and inspiration
- that they see themselves as persons whom the Bible addresses and calls
- that they see how the Bible shapes the church's shared prayer

Objectives

Each session has its own objectives, which will help realize the course goals. The objectives of *Exploring the Bible* that follow are phrased as tasks for the young people.

Session 1: "God's Covenant with Us"

The students will do the following:

- study the core events of the Old and New Testaments
- realize that the Bible is the inspired record of God's covenant with us
- locate passages in the Bible

Session 2: "A Covenanted People"

The students will do the following:

- explore major events in the Old Testament as expanded stories expressing God's Covenant with the Chosen People
- understand Gospel stories as expanded stories that reflect the life-giving death and Resurrection of Jesus

Session 3: "A Committed People"

The students will do the following:

- examine the books of the Old Testament that record the struggles to live as a people committed to the Covenant
- recognize Acts of the Apostles as a record of the Holy Spirit's presence in the early church
- consider themselves as God's people, called to live and act as committed members of the community of believers

Session 4: “A Choosing People”

The students will do the following:

- explore the prophetic books and the Epistles as books of instruction and vocation
- grow in understanding themselves as people called and equipped to live as God’s people

Session 5: “A Celebrating People”

The students will do the following:

- examine the wisdom books as books of instruction and vocation
- understand the place of the Bible in the celebration of the liturgy
- understand how the seasons of the church year relate to the Bible

Session 6: “A New People”

The students will do the following:

- recognize the relation between the Old and New Testaments
- see Jesus’ words and work as a continuation and fulfillment of the Old Testament

RESOURCES

The following books provide helpful background and enrichment for this course:

- Brown, Raymond E. *An Introduction to the New Testament*. New York: Doubleday, 1997. This text is written in a clear, readable style and provides a wealth of current information on the books of the New Testament.
- . *Responses to 101 Questions on the Bible*. New York: Paulist Press, 1990. This small book provides helpful perspectives on frequently asked questions. It also discusses issues about fundamentalist, or literalist, interpretations of the Bible, which are common today.
- Brueggemann, Walter. *The Bible Make Sense*. Winona, MN: Saint Mary’s Press, 1997. This book presents the Bible as sacred literature that functions as a guide in a lifelong dialog between the believer and God.
- Gilles, Anthony E. *The People of the Book: The Story Behind the Old Testament*. Cincinnati: Saint Anthony Messenger Press, 1983. This text offers a concise, informative exploration of the Old Testament.
- . *The People of the Way: The Story Behind the New Testament*. Cincinnati: Saint Anthony Messenger Press, 1984. This text offers a concise, informative exploration of the New Testament.



SESSION

1

God's Covenant with Us



AN OVERVIEW OF THIS SESSION

Objectives

The students will do the following:

- study the core events of the Old and New Testaments
- realize that the Bible is the inspired record of God's covenant with us
- locate passages in the Bible

Session Steps

This session uses pages 1 to 5 of the student booklet and includes the following steps:

- A. a Bible background assessment (10 minutes)
- B. the student booklet activity "Welcome!" and a prayer service (10 minutes)
- C. a creative exercise for making a books-of-the-Bible mural (15 minutes)
- D. the student booklet activity "From the Heart" (5 minutes)
- E. the student booklet activity "God's Word in Your Own Words" (15 minutes)
- F. a closing prayer (5 minutes)

BACKGROUND

This session introduces the Bible as a whole. The opening activity offers the students an opportunity to meet one another and to work in small teams to pool their knowledge about the Bible. Next, in a brief prayer service, the students receive a Bible for their use during this course. Then the students create a mural depicting the books of the Bible. They will refer to this mural throughout the course.

The students then turn to the core narratives of God's self-revelation—the stories of the Exodus-Covenant event, which gave rise to the Old Testament, and of the death and Resurrection of Jesus, which was the foundational event of the New Testament. After reading about these two occurrences, the students study a biblical narrative about each of them. This Scripture study may be their first formal experience of locating citations in the Bible, a skill they can develop throughout the course. During the brief closing prayer that brings this session to a close, the students respond to a litany adapted from Psalm 119 that speaks of the Bible as a lamp and light.

PREPARATION

Materials Needed

- blank reusable name tags
- colored markers
- copies of handout 1–A, “What Do You Know?,” one for about every four students
- pens or pencils
- newsprint and markers
- masking tape
- a Bible, a pillow or a Bible stand, a table and a cloth, a cross or a statue, a live plant or other object from nature, and a pillar candle and matches (These items are referred to in subsequent materials needed lists simply as an enthroned Bible.)
- student booklets, one for each student
- blank self-adhesive labels, one for each student
- Bibles, one for each student
- ten envelopes
- one copy of resource 1–A, “Books of the Bible”
- a scissors
- shelf paper
- one copy of resource 1–B, “A Bible Bookshelf”
- a bottle of glue or a glue stick
- blank bookmarks, one for each student

Other Necessary Preparations

Prepare to lead this session by doing the following things and checking them off as you accomplish them:

- For step A.* Mount several blank sheets of newsprint along the wall horizontally in the front of the meeting room.
- For step B.* Put Bibles for the students near the enthroned Bible.
- For step C.* Prepare envelopes as directed in step C.
- For step C.* Label shelf paper as instructed in step C.
- For step E.* Make bookmarks as suggested in step E.
- For step E.* Prepare a sheet of newsprint as described in step E.
- If you wish to change the procedure to better fit your teaching preferences or the learning style of your group, see the Options section at the end of this session plan.

Teacher Prayer

To begin your prayer and this course, trace a small cross over your heart and on your lips as you say the following words:

May the Lord be in my heart and on my lips that I may fittingly share the Scriptures with these students today.

Call to mind and say the name of each student. Pause and then ask God to bless each student and to guide you.

Light a candle. Then reflect on this prayer adapted from Bar. 3:36—4:4:

Lord, you have traced out the way of understanding. You have given wisdom to Jacob, your servant, to Israel, your beloved ones.

.
May we turn toward wisdom. May we together walk by her light toward splendor.

.
May we be blessed with the understanding of what pleases the Lord. Amen.

PROCEDURE

A. Bible Background Assessment (10 minutes)

1. Greet the students as they arrive. Provide blank name tags and colored markers, and direct each student to create a name tag using the name or nickname she or he prefers. Ask the young people to wear their finished tag throughout the session.

2. When everyone has gathered, welcome the young people to this course on the Bible. Invite the students to introduce themselves and tell a nonthreatening fact about themselves. Offer a topic such as favorite kind of pizza topping. Begin by introducing yourself. Then identify a student and ask him or her to do the same. Continue until everyone is introduced.

3. Tell the students that they will have an opportunity to get to know one another better as they work together on an assessment to see how much they already know about the Bible. Direct them to gather in teams of about four. Give each team a copy of handout 1–A, “What Do You Know?,” and a pen or pencil. Ask the teams each to pick a writer to record the team members’ responses on the handout.

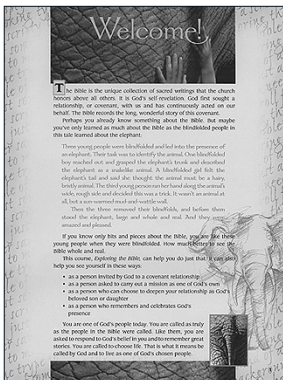
Read the directions from the handout aloud and answer any questions the students have. Comment that you do not expect them to be Bible experts, but that together they may be more expert than they realize. Finally, assure the students that this exercise is not a test but is rather a way for them to assess their knowledge of the Bible.

Announce a time limit of about 5 minutes and have the students begin. Alert the teams when time is about to expire.

4. When time is up, direct the team recorders to come forward and each copy the information from their handout onto a sheet of newsprint mounted on the wall.

5. After the teams have recorded their responses on the newsprint, comment positively on the students’ knowledge of the Bible. Observe that this course offers them an opportunity to deepen their knowledge of the Bible.

Collect the handouts and consider using the information from them to guide your teaching during the balance of this course. For example, if the students demonstrate a particular lack of familiarity with Old Testament characters, you may wish to emphasize that content when teaching activities that include such characters.



Booklet page 1

B. Booklet Activity: “Welcome!,” and Prayer Service (10 minutes)

1. Gather the students near the enthroned Bible. Distribute the student booklets, pens or pencils, and blank self-adhesive labels. Tell the students to write their name on the label and stick it on the cover of their booklet. Give them a few moments to leaf through their booklet. Explain that they will use it in each session and that you will collect all the booklets for safekeeping after each meeting. Add that the students may take their booklet home at the close of the course.

2. Direct the students to turn to “Welcome!” on page 1 of their booklet. Read aloud that introduction to the course.

3. Light the pillar candle in the prayer area. Announce that the students will receive Bibles for their use during the course. Tell them that when you call their name, they are to come forward and receive a Bible from you. Then proceed with this small ritual in a reverent manner. Allow each person to return to her or his place before you call the next student’s name.

4. After all the students have received their Bible and returned to their place, direct them to place their Bible faceup in front of them. Tell the students that you will say a small blessing and read a brief passage from the Bible. Ask them to make a small sign of the cross on their forehead, lips, and heart as you read the blessing. Demonstrate this as you read these words:

- ▶ May the Lord be in our thoughts [touch your forehead], on our lips [touch your lips], and in our heart [touch your heart] as we study and reflect on the Holy Scriptures.

Then ask the students to hold their Bible up on open hands as you say the following prayer adapted from 2 Tim. 3:14–17:

- ▶ May you stay faithful to what you learn and believe.
Remember: ever since you were young children, you have known these Holy Scriptures, which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.
Keep in mind that all the Scriptures are inspired by God.
All the Scriptures are useful for teaching and turning back error; for correction; and for showing you what is right and just and good.
With the help of these Holy Scriptures, may you who belong to God be qualified and ready to do every good work.
The word of the Lord.

Invite the students to say, “Thanks be to God,” at the end of this prayer. Then extinguish the candle.

C. Creative Exercise: A Books-of-the-Bible Mural (15 minutes)

Before the session. Label ten envelopes, “1” to “10.” Then cut apart the books in each set from a copy of resource 1–A, “Books of the Bible”; mix the books within each set; and put each set in the appropriate envelope.

Lay an 8-foot piece of shelf paper horizontally on the floor and draw on it a bookshelf large enough to hold all the “books” from resource 1–A. Write the sections of the Bible along the top of the shelf, referring to resource 1–B, “A Bible Bookshelf,” for their titles and placement. Leave enough space between the sections to allow the students to glue the appropriate books of the Bible from resource 1–A under each label.

1. Observe that the Bible is a large collection of smaller writings, called books. Give the students a minute or two to look through their Bible. Show them the major division between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

2. Explain that the students will create a mural showing the books of the Bible and that they will consult this mural regularly during this course. Ask the students to pair off, and give each pair an envelope of slips from resource 1–A. (If there are more envelopes than pairs, give some pairs more

than one envelope, or put the slips from the extra envelopes in order yourself.)

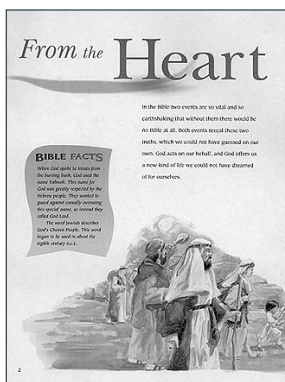
Explain that each envelope has a limited number of titles of the books of the Bible in it. Add that each pair's task is to consult the Bible and to organize the books in its envelope in the order in which they are found in the Bible. Point out that each pair has a different set of books of the Bible to put in order. Comment that after all the pairs have organized their set of books, everyone will assemble to put all the books in the order in which they appear in the Bible. Announce about a 5-minute limit for this task.

(Note: Some students may discover that the easiest, quickest way to complete the task is to consult the table of contents in their Bible. Others may choose to look through the Bible to find their section of books and order the books accordingly. Either method is fine. This activity gives the young people an initial opportunity to begin working with the Bible. It also enlists their help in creating a visual to help them keep track of the books of the Bible as they refer to them in class.)

3. When time is up or when everyone has accomplished the task, call the pairs to come forward and glue their “books” on the “bookshelf” in the order they have discovered. Help the pairs line up in order along the shelf you labeled earlier, with the pair that had envelope 1 on the left-hand end of the shelf and the pair that had envelope 10 on the right-hand end. Draw the students' attention to the labels on the shelf, and refer to resource 1–B to help them line up their books under the appropriate heading. Tell them not to worry about these headings at this point; they will explore their meaning as the course unfolds.

After all the books have been put in order and secured, invite the students to help you mount the shelf on a wall in the meeting room.

Note: Save the books-of-the-Bible mural for use in the remaining sessions of the course.



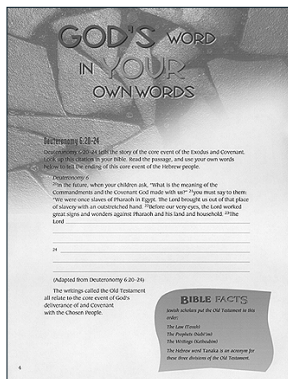
Booklet page 2

D. Booklet Activity: “From the Heart” (5 minutes)

1. Point out that the students' mural shows that the Bible is really more than one book; it is a library of books. Add that today they have an opportunity to learn about the beginning of this library of books called the Bible.

Direct the students to “From the Heart” on pages 2 to 3 of the student booklet. Read the introductory paragraph aloud; then ask the students to read silently the sections “The Exodus Covenant” and “The New Covenant.”

2. Emphasize that the Exodus-Covenant is the core event of the Hebrew, or Jewish, people, and the death and Resurrection of Jesus is the core event for Christians.



Booklet page 4

E. Booklet Activity: “God’s Word in Your Own Words” (15 minutes)

Before the session. Make a bookmark for each student. Either cut bookmarks from high-quality paper or purchase bookmarks with one blank side. On half of the bookmarks, write, “Deuteronomy 6:20–24.” On the other half, write, “1 Corinthians 15:1–5,11.”

Divide a sheet of newsprint into two columns and label the columns, “Old Testament” and “New Testament.” Be ready to post this sheet in part 2 of this step.

1. Explain that the students now have an opportunity to look up how the Bible records the core events they read about in “From the Heart.” Divide the group in half. Give each student in one half a bookmark labeled “Deuteronomy 6:20–24.” Give each student in the other half a bookmark labeled “1 Corinthians 15:1–5,11.”

Direct the students each to choose a partner whose bookmark differs from theirs. (If you have an odd number of students, help them form one team of three with both bookmark labels represented in the team.) After they have done so and settled down, ask the pairs to turn to “God’s Word in Your Own Words” on pages 4 to 5 of their booklet.

Tell the pairs to choose one of the passages from the bookmarks, look it up and read it, and complete the story of the core event from it in their booklet. Note that they may choose either passage and that they are to complete the story in their own words.

Announce about a 5-minute time limit. Circulate among the pairs and help any that are experiencing difficulty locating and interpreting their citation.

2. When time is up, gather the pairs and post the newsprint you labeled before the session. Then ask volunteers to read their version of the Deuteronomy or First Corinthians citation. As they do so, list in the appropriate column on the newsprint the actions of God that constitute these two core events. The students should identify the following actions:

- *Old Testament: Deut. 6:20–24.* God’s Chosen People were delivered from slavery in Egypt; they were promised a land of their own; they were given a Covenant relationship with the Lord, expressed as statutes and decrees (that is, commandments).
- *New Testament: 1 Cor. 15:1–5,11.* Christ died for our sins; he rose to new life; his followers are witnesses to his life.

3. Direct the students’ attention to the books-of-the-Bible mural. Locate the Book of Exodus (the second book of the Old Testament) and use a marker to fill in the circle at the bottom of the spine of that book; do the same for First Corinthians (the seventh book in the New Testament).

Emphasize that the two core events the students just discussed form the heart of the Old Testament and the New Testament. Explain that in the following session of this course, they have a chance to learn how all the other books of both Testaments relate in some way to these core events.

F. Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

1. Comment that a psalm, or prayer, from the Bible recalls the importance of God's word. Invite the students to respond to each of the following verses adapted from Psalm 119 by saying, "I seek you with all my heart."

► Show me how much you love me, O Lord. Grant me your salvation as you have promised. (Vs. 41) . . .

You are all I need, O Lord. I promise to keep your word. (Vs. 57) . . .

You have kept your promise to me, your servant. You are good to me, O Lord. (Vs. 65) . . .

I long for your saving presence. I put all my hope in your word. (Vs. 81) . . .

Your word is a lamp that guides my feet, a light along the pathway. (Vs. 105) . . .

You are my safe place and shield. I hope in your word. (Vs. 114) . . .

2. Bring this prayer to a close by commenting that the students will continue to explore the Bible as a source of God's promise and guiding presence. Tell the young people that you look forward to seeing them in the next session. Collect the Bibles, student booklets, and name tags as they leave.

Note: Save the Bibles and booklets for use in all the remaining sessions, and the name tags for use in session 2 if you so desire.

OPTIONS

After reading the session plan, you may choose to do some things differently or to make additions to an activity. Consider your time limitations first and then the following optional approaches.

For step A. In part 4 of step A, consider sharing the team results as a group discussion rather than as written reports. You might read aloud the items from handout 1-A, pausing after each item and soliciting responses from the teams.

For step A. Set aside a box for questions the students might have about the Bible. Call their attention to the box. Assure them that they can submit anonymous questions at any time during the course, and that you will address their questions in later sessions. Provide slips of paper, and pens or pencils, for writing questions.

For step A. If you think it is necessary or appropriate, establish guidelines for group discussions. You might invite the students' ideas as you list them on newsprint. Or consider posting the following guidelines and asking the students to add to them:

- All opinions are respected.
- One person speaks at a time.
- Each person deserves to be listened to.
- Each person has a right to speak or to pass.

Post the newsprint guidelines in the classroom for this and subsequent sessions.

For step A. Use the items from handout 1–A as contest questions for a quiz show. Put each item on a separate slip of paper in a box. Give each student ten buttons or paper clips to use as bidding chips. Have the students each bid a number of chips, and then draw out a question. The students who answer correctly keep their chips; the ones who do not, give up their chips. Whoever has the most chips when the last question is answered wins.

Keep the tone light. Consider giving inexpensive gag gifts at the end of the quiz show. Also consider giving “encouragement” prizes to those who have the least chips.

For step E. If the students are unfamiliar with looking up Bible citations, provide time for extended practice. Use the adaptations from Deuteronomy and First Corinthians on pages 4 and 5 of the student booklet to begin a discussion. Offer the following explanation in your own words:

- The Scriptures are divided into books; the books, into chapters; and the chapters, into verses.

Use the extract of Deut. 6:20–24 on page 4 as an example. Invite the students to find in it the numeral 6, which designates the chapter. On newsprint write, “Deuteronomy 6:” or “Deut. 6:” On page 4 point out the small numerals in superscript, 20 to 24, that seem to be buried in the text. Add these numerals to the citation on the newsprint. The complete citation should read, “Deuteronomy 6:20–24” or “Deut. 6:20–24.” Explain that this is called a citation, and the order is book, chapter, and verse. Point out that all the books of the Bible are cited in this manner except the Book of Psalms, which is cited as the psalm number and verse, such as Psalm 23:1.

To check on the students’ understanding, ask them to look up the following passages: 1 Cor. 13:13, Exod. 15:11–13, and Matt. 28:1–10. Provide guidance and further practice as needed.

For step F. If the students have been given Bibles to keep and to use during the course, you may still want to collect them at the end of each session, to ensure that they are available during the sessions and not left at home or elsewhere. If this is the case, be sure the students write their name inside their Bible before they leave this session. Some Bibles have a special page for the owner’s name. If this isn’t the case, you might want to provide a special bookplate with the student’s name on it to paste in the inside cover.